

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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R 051516Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3553
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PORG PLO LE
SUBJ: POST-PNC ATTITUDES, A BEIRUT PERSPECTIVE

1. SUMMARY. IT IS IN THE REFUGEE CAMPS OF LEBANON, WHERE THE PLO LEADERS CARRY ON THEIR BUSINESS AND HAVE THEIR OFFICES, THAT PLO POLICY IS FORMED. THE FOLLOWING IS A COMPENDIUM OF POST-PNC ATTITUDES COMPILED BY AN EMBOFF WITH A BACKGROUND IN PALESTINIAN AFFAIRS, FROM HIS CONTACTS AMONG PALESTINIANS IN BEIRUT. IN BRIEF, HE FINDS THERE WAS LITTLE LOCAL INTEREST IN THE PNC, BUT PRESIDENT CARTER'S REMARKS ABOUT A PALESTINIAN HOMELAND HAD GREAT IMPACT. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE APATHY WHICH IS SETTLING IN MAY SHORTLY LEAD THE PLO TO ATTEMPT TO STIR THINGS UP BY RESUMING TERRORIST OPERATIONS.
END SUMMARY.

2. THE MAJORITY OF THE PALESTINIANS IN LEBANON CONSIDERED THE PNC A SIDE SHOW, AND NOT A VERY INTERESTING ONE AT THAT:
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THEY HAD HEARD IT ALL BEFORE, SAID BY THE SAME PEOPLE WITH THE SAME DIFFERENCES OF OPINION. THIS MAJORITY IS COMPOSED OF THE PEOPLE IN THE CAMPS, THE FIGHTERS AND THE FEW PALE-STINIANS WHO HAVE GAINED ACCEPTABILITY IN LEBANESE SOCIETY. AS EXAMPLES OF THIS INDIFFERENCE, NIGHTLY LECTURES ON THE DAY'S EVENTS AT THE PNC, HELD AT THE PLO OFFICES IN THE CAMPS, DREW ONLY A FEW HARD CORE MEMBERS, AND PAMPHLETS

EXPLAINING THE RESULTS OF THE PNC WERE DISCARDED WITHOUT BEING READ. MOST OF THOSE WHO CARED ABOUT THE PNC WERE IN CAIRO, AND THE FEW WHO REMAINED LISTENED TO COMMUNIQUES AT AL-HADAF OR IN WELL-GUARDED OFFICES ON FAKANI AND HAMMAMI STREETS IN SABRA AND CHATILLA CAMPS.

3. THOSE LISTENING, DID SO HALF-HEARTEDLY BECAUSE THEY WERE CLOSE ENOUGH TO THE DECISION-MAKERS TO KNOW THAT THERE WOULD BE VERY FEW CHANGES, AND CERTAINLY NOTHING STARTLING. A FEW PNC AFFICIONADOS GOT SOME EXCITEMENT OUT OF THE MODERATE-REJECTIONIST EXCHANGES, BUT THERE WAS NO EXCITEMENT ABOUT SUBSTANCE BECAUSE THERE WASN'T ANY. THIS YEAR THERE WERE FIFTEEN POINTS INSTEAD OF TEN. MAYBE NEXT YEAR THERE WOULD BE TWENTY. SADAT AND ASAD MIGHT MAKE STATEMENTS, BUT THE PALESTINIANS IN BEIRUT KNEW WHAT WOULD BE SAID IN THE PNC. THEY KNEW BECAUSE THE PNC WAS HELD IN THE CAMPS IN LEBANON, NOT IN CAIRO. THE MEDIA AND DIPLOMATS MIGHT REPORT ABOUT THE EFFECT THE REJECTIONISTS WOULD HAVE ON THE PNC, BUT THE CAMPS KNEW THAT THOSE WHO OPPOSED ARAFAT AND HIS FATAH COHORTS WERE BELEAGUERED FINANCIALLY, ORGANIZATIONALLY, AND IDEO-LOGICALLY. WERE YOU A REJECTIONIST BECAUSE THE IRAQIS AND LIBYANS WANTED YOU TO BE, OR BECAUSE YOU HONESTLY BELIEVED? THE CAMPS KNEW THAT THE ONLY THING THAT MATTERED WAS THE FATAH-SYRIAN RELATIONSHIP AND WHAT FATAH WANTED IT WOULD GET.

4. WALDHEIM AND SECRETARY VANCE MIGHT TALK ABOUT THE NECESSITY OF THE PLO TO CHANGE ITS ATTITUDES ABOUT THE EXISTENCE OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL AND, IN FACT, THE PLO LEADERSHIP MIGHT AGREE AMONG THEMSELVES TO STAY IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA

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FOR ALL TIME, BUT AS LONG AS THERE IS ONE MAN FROM LYDDA OR JAFFA IN THE CAMPS, THE PLO CAN NEVER CHANGE ITS POSITION OR RENOUNCE ITS CLAIMS OVERTLY. NO ONE IN THE PLO IS PREPARED TO GIVE AWAY ANOTHER MAN'S HERITAGE, NO MATTER HOW REMOTE MAY BE HIS CHANCE OF EVER OBTAINING IT. THE PALESTINIANS HERE SEEM TO UNDERSTAND THIS GAME OF DREAMS AND SEMANTICS AND CANNOT UNDERSTAND WHY THE USG DOESN'T. ALSO, THE PLO BELIEVES IT HAS MADE SOME MODERATING MOVES AND HAS YET TO SEE ONE ON THE PART OF THE ISRAELIS.

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5. PRESIDENT CARTER'S COMMENTS ABOUT A PALESTINIAN "HOME-LAND" HAD A GREAT IMPACT ON THE PALESTINIANS IN LEBANON. LOCAL ARABIC NEWSPAPERS REPORTING EXACTLY WHAT THE PRESIDENT SAID WERE PASSED AROUND FROM HAND TO HAND. PEOPLE BEGAN USING THE TERM "THE CARTER DECLARATION" IN OBVIOUS REFERENCE TO THE BALFOUR DECLARATION ON A NATIONAL HOME FOR THE JEWS, MADE SIXTY YEARS AGO, THAT WAS THE BEGINNING OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL. A FEW PLO POLITICOS TRIED TO DOWNGRADE CARTER'S REMARKS. THE PFLP PUT OUT A PAMPHLET POINTING OUT THAT THIS WAS JUST AN IMPERIALIST TACTIC. BUT THE CAMP DWELLER HEARD ONLY ONE WORD, SAID BY THE LEADER OF THE MOST POWERFUL NATION AND GREATEST SUPPORTER OF ISRAEL: HOMELAND. THEY WANT THEIR LEADERS TO STOP TRYING TO ANALYZE THE WORD AND ITS CONTEXT. THEY WANT THEIR LEADERSHIP TO TAKE THE WORD AND RUN. BUT THE LEADERSHIP BELIEVES IT MUST WAIT TO HAVE THIS WORD INTERPRETED FOR THEM BY THEIR ARAB BROTHERS WHO ARE QUEUING UP FOR THE WASHINGTON EXPRESS. THEY WONDER HOW MANY DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS THEY WILL GET. THE CARTER SPEECH

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ACTUALLY CAUGHT THE PLO COMPLETELY OFF GUARD AND WAS AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN THE COMPARATIVE UNITY AT THE END OF THE PNC. SOME WANTED TO JUMP ON WHAT LOOKED LIKE A BANDWAGON, OTHERS WANTED TO BE CLOSE ENOUGH TO BE ABLE TO CAUSE TROUBLE SHOULD A SOLUTION NOT OF THEIR LIKING BE APPARENT.

6. A MODERATE PALESTINIAN KNOWN TO MOST FSI GRADUATES CLAIMS THAT FORTY PERCENT OF THE PALESTINIANS IN BEIRUT ARE REJECTIONISTS. THAT IS NOT QUITE ACCURATE. FORTY PERCENT

OF THE POLITICALLY ACTIVE PALESTINIANS MAY BE REJECTIONISTS, BUT THIS REPRESENTS A VERY SMALL PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF PALESTINIANS IN BEIRUT OR IN LEBANON. TO THE MAJORITY OF PALESTINIANS WHO ARE FATAH BECAUSE FATAH PAYS BETTER, TAKES CARE OF MARTYRS' FAMILIES AND HAS LOTS OF GUNS, OR ARE PFLP BECAUSE THE PFLP COURTS DREAMERS, THE PROBLEM IS A VERY SIMPLE ONE, AND THE SOLUTION IS SIMPLER STILL. PLO RHETORIC HAS BROUGHT THEM NO CLOSER TO SOLUTION. THE PROBLEM: NO ONE WANTS THE PALESTINIANS IN THEIR LAND. THE SOLUTION: GIVE THE PALESTINIANS A LAND. THE ORGANIZATION THAT REALIZES THE LATTER, MODERATE OR REJECTIONIST, CAN CLAIM THE PALESTINIAN MAJORITY.

7. APATHY IS SETTING IN IN THE PALESTINIAN COMMUNITY IN LEBANON AND APATHY IS THE WORSE THING THAT CAN HAPPEN TO A REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT. THE PLO LEADERSHIP IS AWARE OF THIS DRIFT INTO APATHY. THE PNC MEANT ABSOLUTELY NOTING IN LEBANON. THE BONDS THAT HELD THE COMMUNITY TOGETHER DURING THE CIVIL WAR ARE LOOSENED AND NOW PETTY SQUABBLING AMONG THE VARIOUS GROUPS IS RAMPANT. ARAFAT DID NOT RUSH BACK TO BEIRUT OR TAKE A GRAND TOUR OF THE ARAB COUNTRIES AS HE HAD PLANNED BECAUSE HE KNEW THE PNC WAS A FLOP HERE. AT LEAST TO THE POLITICALLY SENSITIVE ARAFAT IT WAS. AS POLITICAL OPTIONS DWINDLE FOR THE PLO, AND APATHY SETS IN AMONG THE MASSES, THE PLO IS LIKELY TO TURN, ONCE AGAIN TO ITS ULTIMATE OPTION FOR OVERCOMING INERTIA: TERRORISM. IF BEIRUT IS A GOOD BAROMETER OF PALESTINIAN INTENTIONS, AND WE BELIEVE IT IS, CONFIDENTIAL

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WE BELIEVE WE CAN EXPECT THE PLO TO UNLEASH ITS "DOGS OF WAR" UNLESS ARAFAT HAS AN EXTRAORDINARILY SUCCESSFUL AND POLITICALLY EXPLOITABLE VISIT TO THE SOVIET UNION. PLO POLITICAL OPTIONS HAVE ONCE AGAIN REACHED THAT POINT. PARKER

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